



**MICHIGAN
CAMPAIGN
FOR
QUALITY CARE**

MICHIGAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

**Testimony of Alison E. Hirschel, Michigan Advocacy
Project and Michigan Campaign for Quality Care
Before the House Appropriations Committee
May 13, 2009**

Goodmorning, Rep. Cushingberry and members of the Committee. I am an elder law attorney at the Michigan Poverty Law Program. I am testifying on behalf of the Michigan Advocacy Project (MAP), a joint project of the Michigan League for Human Services and the Michigan Poverty Law Program. MAP advocates on a number of issues of concern to the state's low income population. I also represent the Michigan Campaign for Quality Care, a statewide consumer group seeking better care, better quality of life, and better choices for Michigan's long term care consumers.

I am deeply concerned about the elimination of the four Single Point of Entry Demonstration Projects, known as Long Term Care Connections, and urge the Legislature to restore at least partial funding to these important entities. As you know, in the last several years, Michigan has made a significant commitment to long term care reform and to creating an effective, efficient, high quality long term care system that meets the needs and honors the choices of our burgeoning long term care population. The Governor's Medicaid Long Term Care Task Force recommendations created a blue print for our reform efforts and identified Single Points of Entry as the foundation of long term care reform. In fact, the Task envisioned that they would be available statewide by 2008, not eliminated in 2009.

As you know, our four The Long Term Care Connections (LTCC) demonstration projects serve several purposes:

- Provide comprehensive information and assistance and Options Counseling to consumers;
- Facilitate a person-centered planning process with consumers that allows them to set goals, make choices, and plan services;

- Conduct independent level of care determinations to establish whether a consumer has a medical need for a nursing home or the MiChoice home and community based program;
- Assist consumers in learning about and applying for available public and private benefits;
- Facilitate nursing home transitions;
- Serve as a single point of entry into Medicaid funded long term care.

The LTCCs are designed to be highly visible and trusted sources of information about long term care and to serve as a resource to consumers, their families, and professionals who work with long term care consumers.

The four demonstration projects, like any new entities, were still evolving. A formal evaluation of their progress so far was to be released soon, but we know they are already achieving some of the benefits the Task Force envisioned. Many consumers are receiving assistance and information from an unbiased source. And I understand that the LTCCs have already achieved some savings because they are conducting independent level of care determinations and have no financial interest in determining an individual is eligible for nursing home care or the MiChoice program.

There are a number of compelling reasons why we need to maintain at least partial funding to the LTCCs.

1. Earlier this year, the Governor issued an Executive Order eliminating the Office of Long Term Care Supports and Services. Now, with the recent decision to eliminate Single Points of Entry, **it appears the state has abandoned its commitment to a well coordinated, cost-effective and unified long term care system.**

2. As you know, P.A. 634 requires the Department of Community Health to maintain Single Points of Entry through December 31, 2011. **Thus, the Executive Order eliminating Single Points of Entry conflicts with this statutory requirement.**

3. Thirty-three states have established some form of Single Points of Entry and they are viewed as the foundation of long term care reform by both the Administration on Aging and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

4. Both state officials and SPE leadership have gone to considerable effort to develop effective services, data analysis, systems of quality management, and evaluation reports. **Once the SPE system is dismantled, it will be both costly and time-consuming to recreate it, thus delaying our long over due reform efforts even further.**

Eliminating the Single Points of Entry will be a huge step backwards at a time when Michigan still lags behind the majority of other states' long term care reform efforts. Consumers will be directed to long term options by self-serving providers instead of skilled and independent SPE staff. The state will lose its ability to plan effectively for the long term care needs of the burgeoning aging population and people with disabilities. Moreover, although the state has been quite effective in obtaining significant federal grants to assist its long term care reform efforts, both existing and future grants may be imperiled by the dismantling of the SPE system. Walking away from opportunities for critically needed federal funds because of the present fiscal crisis is short-sighted and a huge mistake.

Please restore at least partial funding to the LTCCs and preserve this state's commitment to some of its most fragile and vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.